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UNCLAS GUATEMALA 000489

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR G/TIP

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: EMBASSY VIEWS ON REGIONAL ANTI-TIP HARMONIZATION

REF: STATE 32314

1. (SBU) Summary: Embassy concurs that regional harmonization of anti-trafficking in persons legislation, as outlined in RefTel, would further U.S. interests in Guatemala. Harmonized anti-TIP legislation is necessary to achieve greater regional cooperation to prevent and combat trafficking, and to protect the rights of victims. The Regional Conference on Migration may be a useful forum in which to promote these efforts. In Guatemala, prospects for passage of new anti-TIP legislation is complicated by election-year politics. For this reason, regional discussions would be helpful in 2003, while legislative efforts are more likely to prosper in 2004. End Summary.

2. (SBU) The following responses are keyed to questions in RefTel para 4:

a) Willingness of key national legislators to introduce and promote harmonized anti-TIP legislation:

-- National elections for President, Vice President, all Congressional deputies and all Mayors will be held in November 2003. The official campaign period will open in May, but political jockeying has already begun, complicating the passage of any legislation this year. For this reason, prospects for passage of G/TIP harmonization legislation will be better in 2004. Efforts to pass such legislation in 2003 would depend on the willingness of the National Republican Front (FRG), which has a simple majority in Congress, to support it. That willingness is not assured -- the GOG and FRG are smarting from the recent U.S. counter-narcotics decertification decision.

b) Openness of legislature and government to work with neighboring governments, NGOs, and IOs to achieve harmony of anti-TIP legislation:

-- We believe the GOG and ruling FRG are open to regional cooperation in this area with other governments and international organizations. In general, the GOG has more hesitation working with regional NGOs.

c) Prospects for passage of an harmonized anti-TIP bill:

-- Prospects for passage of legislation in 2003 is fair. We estimate that prospects for passage in the new Congress in 2004, with substantial USG lobbying and support, would be good.

d) impact of a legislative debate on TIP in Guatemala, regardless of passage:

-- Congressional debate would raise awareness among legislators, but the issue could also be distorted (e.g. from TIP to USG interference) by some for political considerations related to the 2003 political campaign.

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